DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 461 111 CS 216 128

AUTHOR	Hanson, Anne M.
TITLE	Parents as Writing Partners. Teaching Ideas and Topics.
INSTITUTION	National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, IL.
PUB DATE	1994-10-00
NOTE	7p.; Excerpted from "Notes Plus" (October 1994), published by NCTE.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Collaborative Writing; Grade 7; Instructional Innovation; Junior High Schools; *Parent Participation; *Parent Student Relationship; *Student Motivation; Student Projects; Student Role; *Writing Assignments; *Writing Workshops

ABSTRACT

For one educator, "Parents as Writing Partners" has been one of the most rewarding experiences of her teaching career. Her seventh-grade students got closer to their parents' thoughts and feelings through encouragement to reinforce their writing, conferring, and editing skills. When parents are asked to share in an assignment, they get closer to their children's learning. Once a teacher is confident that students understand the writing process, he or she can send home a letter inviting parents to join the workshop. Students should be given guidelines for their role as teachers-facilitators. Parents and siblings are invited to an "Authors' Day" at the end of each quarter for sharing favorite works. By inviting parents to join in the writing process, students nurture their understanding of the process and their relationships with their parents. (Contains two figures which illustrate the letters sent to parents.) (CR)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 461 111

Teaching Ideas and Topics

Parents as Writing Partners

assessment | class activities | composition | critical thinking | gender | language & diversity | literature | reading | research | technology | whole language | writing |

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

M. Myers

1

Anne M. Hanson
Fountain Hills Junior/Senior High School
Fountain Hills, Arizona
Contributor: Staff
Email: webmaster@ncte.org

This teaching idea is excerpted from *Notes Plus* (October 1994), published by NCTE.

Would you like to get your junior high school students and their parents totally and enthusiastically involved with the writing process? Invite students to help their parents to write a piece of prose or poetry!

"Parents as Writing Partners" has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my teaching career. My seventh-grade students get closer to their parents' thoughts and feelings through my encouragement to reinforce their writing, conferring, and editing skills. When parents are asked to share in an assignment, they get closer to their childrens' learning.

"Parents as Writing Partners" is for teachers who believe in experimenting in their classrooms and who believe, as I do, in the exciting possibilities inside young people of all ages. Here's how it works.

CS 216 128

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

I. HOW TO START THE PROJECT

Let the writing begin! Writers' Workshop

Once I am confident my students understand the writing process, I send home the following letter that invites parents to join our workshop (Figure 1). Figure 2 shows the letter I use in the spring.

Figure 1.

Parents as Writers ' Workshop Partners letter

Dear Parents,

Won't you please join me and your child in an exciting project? You are invited to join our Writers' Workshop for several days of experimentation and discovery. You will be guided by your son or daughter through the process of

- choosing your own topic on which to write a short piece
- brainstorming ideas and feelings about your topic
- writing a rough draft
- revising, editing, and producing a finished piece of prose or poetry.

Your partner will help you along by using our "user-friendly" workshop techniques.

Because teaching is one of the best tools to learning, I am sure you can appreciate the value this project will have in the growth of your child's writing talents.

While it is in no way mandatory, I hope you will accept this opportunity to write a piece for our workshop, and maybe even join us on Authors' Day, when you will be able to celebrate yourself as an author!

Thank you for considering the project, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Figure 2.

Parents as Poetry Partners letter

Dear Parents,

Do you remember how successful our first encounter with Parents as Writing Partners was? The class and I thoroughly enjoyed reading each piece that was submitted, and you deserve another gigantic thank you.

Now it's May and spring is in the air. Our writing efforts will be focusing on poetry. Your child is prepared to assist you in a number of ways and invites you to accept our invitation to experiment and celebrate ourselves as poets.

Thank you for the time you will spend trying your hand at poetry. And please, don't worry--you'll have your teacher sitting next to you offering assistance along the way!

Sincerely,

II. PREPARE THE STUDENTS

Often students tell me firmly that their parents are too busy to get involved in such silliness. The next day, these same students come back and tell me they cannot believe how excited their parents are to be asked to participate. I direct my students to take home to their partners the same patience and encouragement they offer to their peers in class. I give them the following guidelines and they are ready to accept their roles as teacher-facilitators.

How to Help Your Home Partners

- Help partners choose a topic to write about:
  - a person
  - an event
  - a feeling
- Help them set up a brainstorm cluster filled with strong images.
- Help them write a draft--prose or poetry. Write from their dictation if they are too busy. (Define and explain line break and stanza if poetry is chosen.)
- Confer, revise, and edit with them using workshop strategies.
- Help them write a final copy. Write from their dictation if they are too busy.
- Invite partners to attend our Authors' Day.

III. CELEBRATE THE RESULTS

Parents write stories that are often poignant:

Fire!!! You can almost feel the heat. Fire!!! Do you ever give it a second thought? I never did until October of 1957. . . I stood on that corner for what seemed like an eternity. Not reacting, not crying, just watching this macabre dance of flame destroy everything we owned. . . . We stood hugging and crying, the horrible feeling of having lost our home and the joyful feeling of being alive mixing together with our tears.

(from "Fire," by Danielle's father, Jim)

Parents write poems that are equally moving:

. . . A warm summer's day

the smell of a rose,

playing cards at the kitchen table

There is no good-bye

You live on in my heart.

(from "Matters of Life and Death,"
by Jim's mother, Lisa)

Over the years I have never tired of my "additional students." And I cannot help asking myself: would their stories and poems have been written without this project?

IV. AUTHORS' DAY

The perfect setting in which to present the special pieces is Authors' Day, the day at the end of each quarter set aside for sharing our favorite works. It is truly satisfying having parents and younger brothers and sisters in our circle of authors, eating chocolate chip cookies and sharing their stories and poems. (Frequently brothers and sisters get involved in addition to parents!)

V. THANK THE PARENTS

One father, cautioning his daughter that she might not understand what he meant, wrote elegantly:

A

poem

can be a

musical way

home.

By inviting parents to join in the writing process, students nurture their understanding of the process and their relationships with their parents. Prose, and indeed poetry, becomes the musical way

home. I use the following thank-you letter.

Parents as Writing Partners Thank-You letter

Dear _____

Please accept my great appreciation and thanks for your cooperation during our "Parents as Writing Partners" project. The response was tremendous, and I was impressed, once again, with the interest parents take in their children when they are invited to get involved.

If you were able to attend our Authors' Day, I hope you enjoyed sharing and listening to our prose and poetry.

Perhaps you will write more often now that you know you have a true writing partner willing to help you express your ideas! It's been a wonderful year.

To order a subscription to *Notes Plus*, call NCTE at 1-800/369-6283 or click here.

search
help
contact us